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THE IDES OF APRIL

by William Henry Chamberlin

The Italian national election, on April 18, will be one of the most fateful tests of public sentiment held in the peninsula since the time of Julius Caesar. A new Caesarism, Communist or conservative, may indeed result from the voting.

Historic parallels spring easily to mind, in Italy. Should the Italian branch of Moscow's Cominform seize power, legally or illegally, we might see a new sack of Rome by the barbarians, and the Catholic Church, in its apostolic seat, reverting to the catacombs. The civil wars of the Gracchi, of Marius and Sulla, which finally destroyed the Roman Republic, could return with new issues, under new names.

The coming election would be significant for the fate of the struggling post-Fascist republic, even if Italy were hermetically sealed from the outside world. Actually, the Italian peninsula is a vitally important sector in the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union. The recent imposition, by fifth column methods, of a Communist-dominated police State in Czechoslovakia was sufficient to inspire a spate of war talk in America. Yet Czechoslovakia was already pretty securely in the Soviet zone of influence.

What would be the effect in our country of a sweeping Communist victory in Italy? It might well be that of the loosened stone which starts an avalanche. Such a victory would be a stunning blow to ERP and to the whole theory that Communism can be contained by dollars. For the first time one of the principal adversaries in the cold war would leap into the territorial preserve marked out for the other.

A Communist victory in Italy would nullify, or at least gravely compromise, the Anglo-American strategy of holding the line in the eastern Mediterranean against Soviet incursions. Our military takes that strategy very seriously. We have just seen it favored at the expense of all the Zionist aspirations for Palestine.

II

Principal competitors in the Italian election are Prime Minister Alcide de Gasperi's Christian Democratic Party, the largest in the present parliament, and the "Popular Democratic Front for Liberty, Peace and Labor".

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The latter is a coalition of the Italian Communists, under Palmiero Togliatti, and of the majority of the Italian Socialists who follow the leadership of Pietro Nenni. There is little doubt that Togliatti, a veteran Comintern agent who is clever, subtle, and flexible, will occupy the driver's seat if the Left coalition should be in a position to form a government.

Typical of Togliatti's subtlety, and of Nenni's simple-mindedness, is an incident of the election campaign. Ildefonso Cardinal Schuster, of Milan, issued an order barring absolution to Communists. Nenni, hewing to the traditional anti-clerical line of Italian Socialism, proposed that Cardinal Schuster be censured in parliament, on the ground that his order violated the truce on violence to which all political parties have subscribed. But Togliatti, anxious not to stress an anti-clerical issue at this time, thought up the argument that the Cardinal, as a prince of the Vatican State, was not subject to Italian laws.

Christian Democrats, Communists and, to a smaller extent, Socialists are the parties with the greatest influence on the masses. In thousands of Italian communities, large and small, parish priests and lay organizers belonging to the Catholic Action, with its four million members, are competing vigorously with the trained Communist organizers. The Communists have carried their campaign direct to the picturesque hovels of Italy's five million landless peasants.

The Christian Democrats and the Communist-Socialist bloc will come out as the two strongest forces in the voting. They alone possess the resources, the energy, the mass following, that will insure a large turnout at the polls. But a score of other parties are in the field.

The Uomo Qualunque (Common Man) Party of Guglielmo Giannini has disintegrated. The former Prime Minister, Francesco Nitti, has tried to rally the remnants of Giannini's party and some other non-clerical moderates in a new organization. There are also monarchist and thinly camouflaged neo-Fascist parties. All these, though not making an electoral bloc with de Gasperi and his Christian Democrats, would regard the present Premier as a lesser evil than the Communists.

De Gasperi also has some support on the Left, in Giuseppe Saragat's anti-Communist Socialists and Randolfo Pacciardi's Republicans. No one of these smaller parties is likely to make a spectacular showing at the polls. Yet, taken together, they are likely to hold the balance.

At first sight there would seem little doubt as to Italy's choice between East and West. Italy is of the West. American post-war aid to Italy has already exceeded $1,800,000,000. Italians know from returned

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immigrants that the United States is not a bad place in which to live and work. Secretary Marshall has announced that a Communist Italy would be cut out of ERP.

What has Russia to offer on the other side? It extracted as much as possible from Italy in reparations for itself and for its satellite, Yugoslovia. Most of the Italians who were captured in Russia perished of cold, hunger and maltreatment in Soviet prison camps.

III

If only these factors in the situation were considered, an overwhelming victory of the anti-Communist forces would seem assured. But such a victory is not the impression of the most careful observers of the pre-election scene. A close, hard struggle is generally forecast.

The situation in Italy is one of many vivid illustrations of the short-range character of American diplomacy during and immediately after World War II. We consented to an indefensible eastern frontier for Italy and disarmed that country, while leaving Tito's Yugoslavia free to arm itself to the teeth, with the obliging aid of UNRRA supplies diverted to military use. We prepared a Pandora's Box of trouble by detaching the Adriatic port of Trieste, an 85 per cent Italian city, from Italy and making it the center of an abortive "Free State", exposed to every kind of Yugoslav pressure and intimidation.

To be sure it was a smart trick of international politics when America, along with Britain and France, proposed the retrocession of Trieste to Italy, just before the election. But Machiavelli's fellow countrymen see through devices of that sort easily.

Communism is a tailor-made philosophy for people in despair; and a good many Italians are too despairing to have much interest in Trieste. Take the plight of a little village in proverbially backward southern Italy, where the people are living in conditions of misery and stagnation worse than that of our most poverty-stricken southern sharecroppers. Emigration might help this community, or irrigation might make it possible to bring more land under cultivation. But the Statue of Liberty no longer welcomes immigrants. Only a trickle goes to South American countries. Extensive public works are beyond the power of a government saved from total bankruptcy by American handouts.

So it is not surprising that the missionaries of Communism find many converts. Moreover, the downfall of Fascism, which for more than twenty years had attracted into its ranks many of the abler and more ambitious younger Italians, left a vacuum which the Communists were

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quick to fill. It was the Communist, not the middle class liberal, who had pipe lines to the Labor organizations, who persuaded his partisan group to hide its arms for "the coming revolution".

IV

Election forecasts in foreign countries are a trap for the unwary. Italian sentiment is in such a state of flux and uncertainty that a local development, favorable or unfavorable, on the eve of the election, could alone decide a substantial number of votes.

Well-informed advance guesses have placed the voting strength of the Communist-Socialist bloc at 35 to 40 per cent of the electorate. A vote above forty per cent would be a triumph for Moscow and would precipitate a tense and critical situation. When two irreconcilable groups are of almost equal strength the stage is set for a breakdown of parliamentary government, which assumes some compromise.

Should Togliatti, Nenni and their followers poll less than 35 per cent, the chances that de Gasperi could carry on would be good. In that event any illegal effort of the Communists to seize power would be a clear case of a minority attempting to impose its will.

Their ex-partisans undoubtedly possess stocks of arms and some of the larger municipalities of northern Italy are already under Communist-Socialist control. But the Minister of the Interior, Mario Scelba, who controls the police, has shown energy in repressing open defiance of the law. Intervention from Yugoslavia is sometimes suggested. But, apart from international repercussions, there is so much bitterness between the Italians and the Slavs that an invasion by Tito's forces might do the Italian Communist cause more harm than good.

Perhaps the most striking statement of the campaign was de Gasperi's earnest appeal: "This time we must win. If not, there will be no more free voting in Italy." And this was no mere outburst of campaign oratory. For there has not been one country in which Communists were willing to remain within the framework of democratic procedure, once they got their hands on the key positions of power.

This poses an issue that might well have perplexed such an uncompromising libertarian as John Stuart Mill. If a group, committed by its whole record and philosophy to the destruction of liberty, gets a slight numerical majority, is the minority morally obligated to accept the verdict and wait for the purges and the concentration camps? Italian anti-Communists can no longer call that question theoretical.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events VOL. V, NO. 14

By Frank C. Hanighen April 7, 1948

The Stassen victory in Wisconsin and the consequent decline in Dewey fortunes has given another twist to the already bewildering kaleidoscope of national politics. In the Capital, observers prudently limit themselves to examining the current political anomalies. And among the latter, the phenomenon of Eisenhower continues to be the object of puzzled fascination.

The General's support of selective service and UMT, before the Senate Armed Services Committee, has attracted much less attention among the politicos than his statement in favor of racial segregation in the armed services. Southern reaction was immediately approving. The Daily Worker, on the other hand, uttered more than the usual number of screams of indignation. Those New Dealers in the North who have been boosting Eisenhower preserved a pained silence, but continued to boost. This is an odd phenomenon -- the political miscegenation of the Eisenhower enthusiasts: conservatives and New Dealers. It is, however, a phenomenon of pre-nomination periods, when strange amalgams develop in favor of candidates whose views on the main issues remain a mystery. It was noticeable in the MacArthur boom in Wisconsin. With the exception of Taft, no Republican candidate has taken a clear stand on all the principal political questions.

There is one explanation, not necessarily the correct one, for Eisenhower's following among New Dealers. It is claimed that these elements are using the General as a stalking horse for Justice William O. Douglas. Eisenhower, according to this view, is being employed to remove Truman from the race. When the proper time arrives, the New Dealers will then desert the General for Douglas. On the other hand, we hear that some strongly anti-Communist New Dealers are growing cool towards Justice Douglas. They say that his views are only infinitesimally different from those of Wallace.

Among the Southern delegations in Washington, angry boasts of a Truman defeat are more frequent than explanations of how such an event can come about. We found one prominent Senator, however, whose choler resolved itself into a more intelligible thesis than the rest. This man, who thinks he knows what Eisenhower stands for, says that the General would sweep all Southern states with the exception of Louisiana. "And so would Taft", he added, "if the GOP named him. Vandenberg -- well, probably about half the Southern states. His views on domestic questions are not very clear. But if the GOP names Stassen or Dewey, then the South will reluctantly vote for Truman. The reason for this is that Dewey or Stassen would be for Federal enforcement of FEPC. Taft opposes compulsory FEPC; so does Eisenhower. It is FEPC on which the Southern votes will hinge."

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The Presidential veto message last week on the tax bill inspired much comment, both pro and con. There was, however, one aspect of the veto which received little attention in the editorial columns. Hardly noticed was the fact that President Truman broke the tradition of allowing Congress unchallenged sway over taxes. (Mr. Roosevelt first broke this tradition by vetoing the tax bill in 1944; and it was immediately passed over his veto.)

Now, when President Truman vetoed the tax bill on July 18, 1947, and successfully, his action drew considerable criticism. The Constitution, it was pointed out, gave Congress control over the raising of taxes; and until 1944 the Executive respected this right. Truman followed the pattern set in 1944 by Roosevelt; and sufficient votes were obtained in 1947 to prevent a two-thirds majority for passage

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over the veto. These votes were lacking last week. It would be reassuring if Congress, on April 2, had been really motivated by a desire to rebuke this Executive transgression. Unfortunately, it is obvious that the Congressional majority was prompted primarily by election-year considerations.

It would seem, however, that some disapproval might well have been expressed last week in editorials or over the air; but it wasn't. Apparently one long-respected tradition has been shattered. Worse still, it seems that another, dangerous to legislative prerogatives, has become accepted.

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The manna of income tax reduction obscured an official statement which may herald new policies in the fiscal field. At the Pan-American Conference in Bogota, on April 1, Secretary Marshall said: "The President has under consideration measures to liberalize taxes on capital investment in foreign countries. These measures are designed to encourage not only initial investment but also the retention and reinvestment abroad of earnings derived from such capital." These remarks of Marshall appeared in the context of his advice to Latin American nations to borrow directly in the private money market rather than to seek U. S. Government dollar aid; and to make their countries financially attractive to private investors.

The exact nature of the measures to which Marshall referred is not as yet known. But financial observers recall recent talk of loans abroad receiving tax exemption, wholly or in part, to make them attractive to investors. If dollar bonds receive such preferential treatment, why not, it is asked, equity capital? And if the principle is approved for foreign investments, why not domestic as well? So far, the matter is mainly a subject for conversation, but observers are watching for additional straws in the wind. Paul Heffernan in the New York Times (April 5) remarks: "There are more and more signs around that some of the tax bondage in which investment has been held fettered since the depression is at last about to be relaxed."

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The German munitions magnate, Alfred Krupp, and eleven of his associates, on April 5 were acquitted of charges that they were criminally responsible for assisting Hitler to plan for and wage the last war. The American military tribunal at Nuremberg cleared these men because of insufficient evidence. Specifically, the charges were that the industrialists had conspired to commit crimes against peace and humanity by aggressive war. General Telford Taylor, prominent New Dealer, and chief prosecutor at Nuremberg, expressed disappointment with the verdict.

The archaic reasoning of Taylor and his colleagues constitutes one of the wonders of this extraordinary post-war era. It has seemed obvious to many that Krupp and other industrialists, regardless of their record in pre-Hitler days, became captives of the government of the Third Reich; and that it would have been just as logical to have indicted the workers in their factories. The prosecution apparently views recent history through different lenses; those of social vengeance.

What reasoning the judges used in arriving at their decision is not known in detail, for the text of the opinion is not yet available. But one curbstone expert on jurisprudence remarked: "Perhaps the Nuremberg Tribunal, like the U. S. Supreme Court, reads the American election returns."

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Two Prophets. The following notes are translated from the Madrid Arriba (semi-official daily), March 9-10, 1948. The first is a memorandum by General Francisco Franco, to British Ambassador Sir Samuel Hoare, dated February 21, 1943:

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"Our alarm about the Russian advance is shared not only by the neutral nations, but also by all those people in Europe who have not lost the faculty of sensitive perception and fear. Communism is an enormous menace for the world, and now that it is supported by the victorious armies of a Great Power, all those who are not blind must be discouraged. If Russia comes out of the war triumphant, we believe that even England will adopt our view and perhaps then our fears of today will not seem exaggerated. . . .

"We, who neither enter nor wish to enter the war, can see events with great impartiality. . . . If the course of the war continues unaltered, it is evident that the Russian armies will penetrate deeply into German territory. . . . If this occurs, will not the major peril to the Continent and to England be a Sovietized Germany, which will distribute to Russia its secrets and manufactures of war, its engineers, its technicians and specialists, giving them the opportunity to create a fabulous empire, from the Atlantic to the Pacific? In our opinion, while up until now Russia has been the major danger for Europe, due to her Communist totalitarianism and her military and industrial power, at present this danger is growing enormously. And we ask: Is there any Power in Central Europe, in this mosaic of nations and races without consistency and unity, ruined and shorn by occupation, which could contain the ambitions of Stalin? Evidently not. We can be sure that Communism will reign supreme in these nations after the occupation. For this reason, we consider the situation extremely serious, and we appeal to the good judgment of the British people that they may reflect on this situation: that if Russia occupies Germany, nothing, nobody, can contain her. . . . If Germany did not exist, Europeans would have to invent a Germany, and it would be ridiculous to think that Germany's place could be occupied by a federation of Lithuanians, Poles, Czechs and Romanians, which would be rapidly transformed into a federation of Soviet states."

On February 25, Hoare replied: "Thank you for the Memorandum. . . . It is reasonable that we should exchange our preoccupations and fears. I hope to show that these fears have no basis. You say that the great danger for Europe is Communism and that a Russian victory will bring as a consequence the triumph of Communism in European countries. That would bring the destruction of European civilization and Christian culture. Our point of view is quite the opposite.

"Let us look at the central argument that a Russian victory will draw Europe into Communism and will mean the Russian domination of Europe after the war. But is any single nation going to be capable of dominating Europe after this War? Russia, first of all, is going to be forced to engage in reconstruction on a grand scale and will depend for its help on the British Empire and the United States. Besides, Russia will not win the war to any preponderant extent. The military force will be a common one and the victory will be by all the Allies.

"The probable situation at the end of the war will be the following: large American and English armies will occupy the European Continent. These armies will be equipped with the best arms of all kinds. They will consist of fresh troops of the first rank, which will not be the case with the exhausted Russian army. I will presume to offer the prophecy that [after the war] the strongest military power in Europe indisputedly will be Great Britain. Consequently, it seems to me that the British influence will be the most preponderant which Europe has seen since the fall of Napoleon. This influence will be supported by an enormous military power. . . . With it we will maintain our full influence in all Europe and will take part in its reconstruction. I do not accept therefore the thesis that a post-war Russian peril to Europe will exist. Nor can I accept the idea that Russia will launch an anti-European policy at the end of the struggle."

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Book Events

Adventures of Ideas, by Alfred North Whitehead. New York: Macmillan Company, $4.50.
Reviewed by J. M. Lalley.

Shortly before Professor Whitehead's death last November this work was sent into another printing, which I believe was the tenth since its original publication in 1933. This is an evidence of the slowly widening influence of his thought, and is the more remarkable because Whitehead is among the most abstruse of modern philosophers. The difficulty arises partly from the rigor of his reasoning, partly from his distrust of language which led him into the creation of special terminologies alien to the vocabularies of unprofessional readers.

Adventures of Ideas, however, is one of the least technical of Whitehead's books. It is written in the every day idiom of educated men and generously enlivened by aphorism and epigram. It represents his contribution to the philosophy of history. But since history is, as his title suggests, the proving ground of ideas, one can discern here the broader outlines of the doctrines set forth in such works as Process and Reality and The Concept of Nature. One can also discover in it the tour de force whereby he has reconciled the static and ideal universe of Plato to the Bergsonian world of flux. It is as a Platonist that Whitehead emphasizes the influence of pure ideas on the evolution of events. Ideas of course are not the only influences, but they are powerful and perhaps decisive influences. The character of a civilization is determined by its general ideas and in particular by one general idea, or Weltanschauung, from which the others are engendered. "In each age of the world distinguished by high activity there will be found at its culmination, and among the agencies leading to that culmination, some profound cosmological outlook, implicitly accepted, and impressing its own type on the current springs of action." This unity of vision does not, of course, exclude a clash of ideas, but the ideas which come into conflict are of "secondary generality", and admit "a general agreement on first principles, almost too obvious to need expression and almost too general to be capable of expression". Yet there are historical occasions when this "general form of the forms of thought" is shattered. A new general idea takes possession of the imagination, but its disruptive and revolutionary potentialities may go long unrecognized. As an example he cites the notion of human worth and dignity gradually developed in the ancient world which in the end undermined the institution of slavery and with it the whole edifice of classical civilization.

The destruction of a cosmic vision is usually followed by a period of revolutionary turmoil and of necessity for "interim ethics", such as were provided in the eschatological concepts of primitive Christianity. It is obvious now to everyone that our civilization is well launched into one of these epochs of crisis, but even today few are aware of the magnitude of the revolutionary seas upon which we are adrift. The modern crisis, says Whitehead, is greater than any preceding one, because of the acceleration of historical change made possible by technological innovation. Revolutionary processes which formerly extended over generations now require but a few years, and the rate of acceleration is increasing. Because of this, traditional notions of what constitutes a stable and well-ordered world are no longer valid. Is there nothing, then, that remains constant amid this violent and catastrophic flux? Here again the Platonist in Whitehead asserts himself over the Apocalyptic prophet. Yes, he answers, there remain the eternal and unchanging ideals of value -- goodness, truth and beauty. And there remains the necessity in all human beings to find some reason greater than themselves for believing that what they must do is worth the doing.

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